INTRODUCTION

Poetry, Divinity, Politics, Physics, have each their adherents and adversaries; each little guild supporting a defensive and offensive war for its own specific domain; while the domain of History is as a Free Emporium, where all these beligerents peaceably meet and furnish themselves; and Sentimentalist and Utilitarian, Sceptic and Theologian, with one voice advise us: Examine History, for it is "Philosophy teaching by Experience."—Thomas Carlyle, "On History," 1830

The historical was indeed the common coin of the nineteenth century, the currency of its most characteristic art, the security for its most significant intellectual transactions. Defenders of absolutes, rational or religious, learned to use history as an asset and not a liability; uneasy relativists found some compensation in its didactic value. Rival ideologies competed for its sanctions. Poets and scientists found in it their inspiration. The Victorians plundered the past for the raw stuff of imagination and shaped what they found to their own political, social, and aesthetic ends. The explanatory power of the biological, the developmental, and the narrative made the historical
method the preeminent paradigm of their age. It asserted its authority over science and social science; it became the "philosophical" way of understanding national as well as personal identity. The Victorians found that learning to harness "the Time Spirit of the Nineteenth Century" was the best way to escape being driven by it.¹

Formal works of history illuminate most fully the strategies essential to the nineteenth century's conquest of time. They are documents central to both the philosophical and the literary dimensions of the Victorian mind. They stand at the intersection of its two ways of knowing, the rational and the imaginative. They perfectly reflect that conflation of the scientific, the historical, and the philosophical characteristic of Victorian thought, and that didactic use of the imagined real that was central to its art. This study uses representative examples to explore the strategies at work in Victorian historical writing and the needs served by such strategies. My purpose is not to reconstruct a "Whig history" of the profession, although the transition from the man of letters to the professional historian is part of my story. I am primarily concerned with examining the ways certain nineteenth-century historians negotiated intellectual and moral dilemmas specific to their age. I wish to trace in their historical writings the shape of the Victorian mind, not the priorities of the future.

I characterize the writing of history as an activity that exploited the didactic strategies of both science and literature (as the Victorians understood them) to affirm order and value in human society. Like so many Victorian thinkers, the historian attempted to bring the methodological authority of the physical sciences to the study of man's past. Though acknowledging the limitations of his evidence, he considered himself to be "scientific" or "philosophical" because he analyzed historical data in a systematic and inductive way and because he derived from his facts patterns and laws capable of guiding the present and anticipating the future. Such laws were urgently needed given the force with which the rapid current of change was undermining traditional assumptions and authorities. The Victorians' narrative histories served the same purposes as the rest of their serious literature: to identify what Henry Sidgwick called some "higher unity of system" that could provide for both continuity and change.² These histories reflected what to George Eliot was the "conservative-reforming" impulse of the period: that attempt to reconcile progress with permanence, to formulate values and institutions that could be both dynamic and stable. Not the least important
Introduction

factor in this attempt was the historian’s demonstration that the “scientific laws” of history vindicated, rather than threatened, his assumptions about social and spiritual order.

This demonstration required the historian to reject the materialist and determinist biases inherent in a Utilitarian or Positivist empiricism. He wished to be “scientific” without sacrificing his belief in the primacy of free will and moral law—the belief that alone made man fully human. The imaginative dimension of the Victorian history played an essential role in protecting and substantiating this belief. On one level, of course, quite practical concerns motivated the compelling narratives, vivid portraiture, and self-consciously fictive techniques that were the stylistic trademark of the “literary” history: the historian wished to attract as large as possible an audience to profit from his message. But his aesthetic strategies also testified to the complex functioning of imagination as a way of knowing and understanding the past. In order for historical evidence to have “philosophical” credibility, the historian had to resuscitate the living reality from the dead facts. Believing that the essential truths of man’s past were spiritual rather than material, he needed imagination in order to recover them. Having privileged morality, will, and emotion in historical explanation, he turned naturally to a narrative mode with the affective richness to do them justice. The creative side of his endeavor was also essential to the didactic. To fashion a coherent narrative that “explained” the past was in effect to guarantee its meaningfulness; the assertion of narrative order was an assertion of moral order as well. The style that characterized “literary” history was inseparable from the value judgments and didactic intentions embodied in it.

Like many Victorian writers, the historian abjured the willful falsity of the invented and claimed instead the higher authority of events that had “really” occurred. But in practice he exploited the tactics of both romance and realism. Rendering the historical foreground as a pageant of heroism affirmed the potential for human greatness and the meaningfulness of moral choice; it released the reader from the limits of the ordinary but not from the pressure of duty and emulation. The commonplace asserted different but no less important claims. The historian’s concern with his heroes’ humanizing foibles and their public personae, his attention to the life of the people and the life of the court revealed the conviction he shared with Victorian realism: that the quotidian too was the stuff of vital realities, that the
Introduction

most mundane phenomena often disclosed the highest truths. He shared the novelists’ didactic strategies as well. Assent to the truths of history was finally as much an act of extended sympathy as of rational accord.

The historian’s target was not what George Eliot called the ready-made sympathy elicited by generalizations and statistics. Like the artist, the historian aimed to provide instead the “raw material of moral sentiment,” to convert readers into participants by providing them with a past so detailed and credible that they lived rather than merely observed it. Narrative and ethical order also merged on the highest level, as the historian emplotted over this carefully authenticated reality the triumphant archetypes of romance: the successive stages of Arnoldian progress that incorporated cyclical time in Christian time, the trial and triumph of Froude’s Protestantism, the Whig history’s “familiar optimistic shape of loss and restitution,” Carlyle’s apocalyptic vindication of the True. Qualifications abounded and emphases differed in these patterns—in Carlyle, for instance, the victory of righteousness seems more a threat than a solace—but their consoling power and their authority were intended to be the same.

Ultimately, both the “aesthetics of sympathy” and the need to demonstrate meaningful system blurred the distinction between the created and the discovered. Wissenschaftliche order merged with the secularized teleology of romance to render the scientist’s objectivity simply a pose. The historian’s undertaking was essentially one of affirmation rather than induction. Historical “reality” became more sociologically complex, but it was still molded by desired truths. For these very reasons, the Victorian history tells us more about the ways the Victorians wished to shape their own experience than about the shape of the past itself.

I have chosen six practitioners of the art and science of Victorian history to form the basis of this study: Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), James Anthony Froude (1818-1894), John Richard Green (1837-1883), and Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892). This selection reflects their importance relative to their own age. The popularity and prominence of their major works and the significance of the imaginative dimension to their didactic purposes weighed heavily in my choice. Most important was the self-consciousness of their relationship to their audience. They shared a sense of vocation. Each chose the historian’s role to deliver himself of a vision of the past that
he hoped would do for society what it had done for him: order and make sense of the present. I passed over writers like Sharon Turner or Henry Hallam, whose concern with the past was more thoroughly antiquarian than imaginative, as well as historians who, because of their Utilitarian or Positivist biases, ultimately contributed more to the emergent social sciences than to narrative history *per se*. The professional priorities of later Victorians like William Stubbs and S. R. Gardiner were influential enough to accord them separate treatment in the epilogue.

The six represent a range of approaches. Thomas Arnold is the most eminent historian of what Duncan Forbes called the Liberal-Anglican School. At the beginning of the period he provided the classic statement of the morality and unity of western history. Inspired by German romanticism more than Broad Church Christianity, Carlyle attempted to achieve the same ends as Arnold with a secularized supernaturalism. Macaulay is the foremost of the Whig historians, and Green serves as the major social historian of that same tradition. Like Freeman and Froude, Green found that he had to redefine and defend his identity as historian when the rival professional model began increasingly to assert its claims in the closing decades of the century. Froude’s supporters considered this disciple of Carlyle’s to be the chief defender of the “literary” history against the encroachment of positivistic science; his detractors found him the most blatant example of dilettantism. Froude’s nemesis, E. A. Freeman, is a transitional figure: one of the most vocal spokesmen for the new professionalism, as a practicing historian he was in many ways as deeply traditional as any of the six.

To provide a comparative framework for examining the cultural function of the historian, each chapter asks similar questions about theory and practice. What factors defined the historian’s interest in and conception of history? How did he understand and how did he balance the need to be philosophical and “scientific” with the need to re-create the past as art? What assumptions controlled the patterns or laws he found in the past, and what peculiarly Victorian needs did his explanatory model serve? In particular, how did he balance the respective claims of the great individual, the social group or class, and the spirit of the age in his explanation of change and causality? What conception of progress did he offer? What value judgments about relevant historical experience did the selectivity and treatment of his research imply? How did he shape historical narrative to engage the
imagination as well as the reason of his readers? My examination of specific historical interpretations focuses not so much on the opinions themselves as on the ways in which characteristic biases originate and influence historical analysis in other areas. My consideration of methodology is not intended to be exhaustive, but to furnish valid bases of comparison among the six. Each chapter pays increasing heed to the emerging confrontation between popular and professional historiography. Although professionalization challenged fundamental assumptions about the cultural functions of history and the historian, I will argue in the epilogue that this challenge ended in a compromise rather than a split: that in England, the continuing vitality of the values served by "literary" history shaped professionalism in unique ways.

To establish a common context for the individual analyses that follow, some attention to the major intellectual traditions that converge in the art and science of Victorian historiography is in order. The methods and assumptions of Enlightenment, romantic, and "scientific" historiography play significant if varied roles in the work of each writer. Although the Renaissance had introduced an appreciation of time and process into the static medieval world view and raised the standard of historical research, essentially uncritical attitudes towards texts persisted. The use of history as a polemical weapon during the religious and political controversies of the seventeenth century had so discredited it that by the early eighteenth century many held history in contempt as little more than "popular tale-telling, aimless antiquarianism, or political propaganda." Johnson's and Addison's scorn for the slight abilities and superficial results of contemporary historians was characteristic; Hume undertook his History in the belief that "style, judgment, impartiality, care—everything is wanting to our historians." 7

In one sense, then, the philosophe's task was to establish the legitimacy and importance of historical knowledge, and this they largely accomplished, notwithstanding exaggerated nineteenth-century claims about their "antihistorical" bias. Their empiricist orientation emphasized the importance of documentary support, while their fight against all forms of superstition set new standards in the critical scrutiny of source materials. As William Robertson defined it, "to relate real occurrences, and to explain their real causes and effects, is the historian's peculiar and only province"; he has "no title to claim
Robertson amassed an unprecedented amount of material in his attempt to compose the "authentic" history of Scotland. In the same way, Gibbon felt compelled as much by "a sense of duty" as by his "curiosity" to draw from the "fountain-head" of original sources wherever possible in the Decline and Fall. This resort to the "fountain-head" represented a deliberate rejection of evidence based on faith, tradition, or conjecture, and thus formed part of a larger attempt to assess the reliability of sources in a more critical spirit.

The Enlightenment historians significantly advanced history's explanatory power as well by subordinating facts to system. The eighteenth century had inherited a long tradition of contempt for mere erudition. For Hume as for others, the problem with the "dark industry" of the antiquarian was that his indiscriminate heaping-up of facts ignored or obscured the meaningful pattern of history. "The part of an historian is as honourable as that of a mere chronicler or compiler of gazettes is contemptible," said Gibbon. The historian had also to be a philosopher; he had to discern amidst the chaos of data the shaping principles of human action and to display them in such a way as to teach and guide his audience: "History," Gibbon wrote, "is for the philosophic spirit what gambling was for the Marquis de Dangeau. He saw a system, relationships, and order there, where others saw only the caprices of fortune." It was the historian's duty to illustrate the links between events, to determine those general causes which form the springs (Ressorts) of action in history: only then was he writing en philosophe. Enlightenment thinkers in effect applied the same intellectual tools to both nature and history: their purpose in investigating both was to replace transcendental with empirical causes. Man might have no access to metaphysical truths, but he could, by examining the phenomena of experience critically, determine the relationships between facts and express these in terms of rules or laws. History could become part of what Hume called "a science of man" to the extent that it involved a systematic effort to derive general explanations for human conduct from empirical observation. From his repository of concrete and verifiable evidence about human experience, the historian could formulate "general theorems" that enabled him "to comprehend, in a few propositions, a great number of inferences and conclusions." Such theorems in turn greatly simplified his decisions about what constituted "relevant" data.
The process of shaping and selection necessary to demonstrate the system in history was as much artistic as philosophical. Hume argued, "The unity of action . . . which is to be found in biography or history, differs from that of epic poetry, not in kind, but in degree." Yet the *philosophe* was a man of letters in the highest sense not merely because his stylistic treatment pleased, but because it instructed: artistic selection and control were means to an end. Gibbon drew much the same distinction between Livy and Tacitus as Bolingbroke did between Herodotus and Thucydides: the former was merely an "agreeable story-teller"; the latter illustrated a "chain of events and fill[ed] our heart with the wisest lessons." Narrative order reinforced ethical order. Vivid representation also served didactic ends. History was, after all, "philosophy teaching by examples"; the effectiveness of its "wise lessons" depended upon "a just and perfect delineation of all that may be praised, of all that may be excused, and of all that must be censured."

Notwithstanding these attempts to make historical study more critical and more "philosophical," the Enlightenment's largely unexamined assumptions about progress and human nature diluted its objectivity and its appreciation of historical relationships. Obsessed by the rise and fall of "civilization," the *philosophes* judged men and events by their relationship to eighteenth-century definitions of rationality and progress. "Barbarous ages," if treated at all, were so handled that their "deformity" might teach the present "to cherish, with the greater anxiety, that science and civility which has so close a connexion with virtue and humanity." No fact was important for its own sake. The abridgment necessary to demonstrate history's order and lessons justified the historian in excluding as irrelevant all that he lacked sympathy with: the primitive, the irrational, the uncouth.

His assumptions about human nature narrowed his focus in more significant ways. The Enlightenment historian was not interested in studying men and women so much as in trying to abstract "man in general" from the evidence of human history. His task was to disengage from the folly and fanaticism of the past the "constant and universal principles" of man's "true" nature. In effect the Enlightenment tried to include human nature in the presumed uniformity of the natural world, for the lessons of philosophical history could be practically applied only in a realm where men were considered everywhere and at all times the same. This is precisely what Hume assumed:
Would you know the sentiments, inclinations, and course of life of the Greeks and Romans? Study well the temper and actions of the French and English: You cannot be much mistaken in transferring to the former most of the observations, which you have made with regard to the latter. Mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange on this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials, from which we may form our observations, and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour. These records of wars, intrigues, factions, and revolutions, are so many collections of experiments, by which the politician or moral philosopher fixes the principles of his science; in the same manner as the physician or the natural philosopher becomes acquainted with the nature of plants, minerals, and other external objects, by the experiments, which he forms concerning them.

The philosophers' treatment of human nature had inherent limitations. They conceived men as complexes of psychological traits rather than as complex individuals. Hume could present contradictory aspects of historical figures, but he made little attempt to synthesize them into a personality. He de-emphasized or dismissed as inconsistent traits that did not fit and rejected as incredible motives he could not sympathize with. His History of England may be read as a more concrete elaboration of those abstract principles laid out in the Treatise on Human Nature. Gibbon's "human nature" was limited in similar ways. He too ascribed "the different characters that mark the civilized nations of the globe . . . to the use, and the abuse, of reason," and relied heavily on the vices and virtues of the Romans to explain the rise and decline of empire. The "springs" of national character led to the same sort of "ruling passions," writ large, that dominated individuals.

Despite the Enlightenment's scientific pretensions, a priori assumptions clearly limited its laws and stunted its empiricism. Romantic historiography was still indebted to its pioneering efforts, however. Historicism's emphasis on sympathy built upon the eighteenth century's commitment to observation. The connectedness of philosophical history was at least a first step toward nineteenth-century organicism. The philosophers' ideal of progress, however unhistorically conceived, did allow the possibility of development through time that would be exploited (to different ends) by following generations. The work of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Hume ac-
Introduction

acknowledged the importance of social, cultural, and intellectual factors in historical explanation. Gibbon advanced farthest toward a recognition of the complexity of forces—rational and irrational, material and immaterial—contributing to national consciousness, and he was best able to conceive a more flexible and relativistic causality. Finally, the Enlightenment established conclusively the authority of the historian as man of letters, a literary artist of powerful intellect and broad humanistic culture, and asserted the legitimacy and importance of "philosophical" history: comprehensive, synthetic, and didactic.

The watershed for the shift in historiographical models was the French Revolution. It epitomized the Enlightenment's attempt to free itself from the dead hand of the past by trying to destroy it, to build a new society on reason rather than on tradition. At the same time, the Revolution's results illuminated some of the blind spots of the Enlightenment mind. As the source of historical change, the Revolution replaced the reasoning individual with a mass movement, driven by unpredictable and often irrational impulses. It showed the authority of abstract reason to be as inadequate as that of a naive fundamentalism in explaining human behavior. These changes prepared the way for a crucial feature of romantic historiography: the historicism that shifted attention from the general to the specific, from the mechanical to the organic, and from the judgmental to the sympathetic. As Friedrich Meinecke explained it, "The essence of historism is the substitution of a process of individualising observation for a generalizing view of human forces in history." 23 Revolting against the concept of life and mind governed by a single static law, the romantic reasserted the value of the concrete, the individual, and the suprarational. Against the abstract rationality of the Enlightenment, Coleridge claimed, "Reason never acts by itself, but must clothe itself in the substance of individual understanding and specific inclination, in order to become a reality and an object of consciousness and experience." 24 To writers like Johnson who counseled the poet not to number the streaks of the tulip but rather to exhibit "such prominent and striking features, as recall the original to every mind," Blake flatly replied that "to Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit." 25 Rather than selectively ransacking past ages for confirmation of a uniform human nature and valuing them only as they resembled the present, the historicist held all ages "immediate to God," in Ranke's words.
The new historian endowed nations and peoples with the diversity, uniqueness, and complexity of personalities, viewing societies not as arbitrary aggregates of individuals but as "quasi-biological entities which defied analysis by the exact quantitative methods of chemistry and physics." Like the organism's, the nation's component parts existed in dynamic interdependence, so that individual men, values, and institutions could be understood only as products of an entire complex of conditions. Events were not the result of rational decisions governed by general laws of human nature, but cross-sections of a wider and continuous field of forces. Mechanical laws of cause and effect could not account for the underlying identity of the organism despite its movement through time. The nation's dynamic individuality required an evolutionary concept of change to reconcile permanence and development. The physical growth of the plant, the intellectual and spiritual growth of the individual, provided the romantic historian with models for the histories of peoples and institutions. In the same way, Thomas Arnold conceived a nation's history as its "biography," and Carlyle charted "cycles and seasons" for the mind of mankind.

Accepting the developmental nature of change prevented the romantic historian from seeing his own values as ultimate, or from regarding past beliefs merely as errors. To apply an arbitrary standard to the past was to distort it: his task rather was to open himself unjudgmentally to the unsystematic variety of historical forms in a given age, seeking not resemblances with the present, but the era's own self-justifying identity. He restored to the past much that had been beneath the "Dignity of History" in the eighteenth century, or that, like custom and myth, had been largely inaccessible to its rationalistic analyses. The romantic derived national consciousness from a much wider range of data—geographical, social, and cultural, as well as political—and considered the testimony of the masses as important as that of monarchs and ministers.

More importantly, romantic thought legitimized the role of imagination in the historical enterprise. Dissection into abstract categories perverted the nature of a biological entity: the romantic past had to be "felt, or intuited, or understood, by a species of direct acquaintance." To gain access to it, the historian had to follow Herder's advice: "First sympathize with the nation . . . go into the era, into the geography, into the entire history, feel [einfühlen] yourself into it." Before he could understand the significance of facts he had to
“resuscitate” them: he had to re-create the past in all its specificity before it would divulge its unique unifying principles. Clearly, the mechanical reason and superficial fancy of Hume and Hartley were inadequate to such a task. It took a faculty like Coleridge’s constitutive secondary imagination to discern the unity underlying past events. Only when knowing the truth became an essentially creative process could perception be imaginative without becoming imaginary, based on the senses without being limited to their evidence. And only then could history as an act of imaginative projection and identification claim to expose a truth about the past that had been inaccessible to both fictionalizing chroniclers and rationalistic philosophes.

The romantics tried to reclaim science as well as imagination from the philosophes. Enlightenment science, essentially mechanical, aimed to rank data on a single scale of value, to subsume individuality in uniformity. The understanding of romantic science was relational and organic; it illuminated individuality by investigating the organism’s development in time. For the historicist, as Peter Gay explains it, the idea that man possessed not a fixed nature but an individual history made the historian “the master scientist. The historian is the student of change; the central reality of the world is change—who more important, then, in the scheme of things, than the historian? Again, while other scientists seek universal laws, the historian strives to understand individuals on their own terms, and since individuality is the central reality of men, who more important for the study of man than the historian?” In an even more significant sense, the very constitutive power that made the imagination of the romantic historian “poetic” made it “scientific” as well. Susan F. Cannon demonstrates the distinction made by Wordsworth and echoed by Victorians between “sciences of classification” that gave only “worthless, superficial knowledge” and those “true sciences” that revealed “wider and wider interrelationships” leading “to an understanding of the system of the world and therefore . . . eventually to God.” The same ability to perceive relationships was associated with what Philip Harwood, in his 1842 analysis of “The Modern Art and Science of History,” called “the historic, scientific imagination”: that faculty that knew how to “recreate worlds out of the loose, chaotic elements furnished by chroniclers and bards.” The modern historian became “scientific” not by classifying phenomena but by “combining the scattered and fragmentary parts into wholeness and unity, and giving a plan to the mighty maze” of past life.
Introduction

The links between the scientific and the poetic, the empirical and the romantic, bear stressing, for they had important ramifications in nineteenth-century historiography. The romantic historian's desire to sympathize with the object, to realize it in all its individuality, was not just compatible with but essential to his "scientific" apprehension of it. Understanding "the symbolism of facts," as Harwood put it, might have involved a more conscious creativity than the philosophe acknowledged, but it still began with the historian endeavoring to look steadily at his subject and ended with the identification of history's ordering principles. The romantic historian's search for laws and patterns led directly to the imposition of what Hayden White calls a particular emplotment and argument on the historical field. But this made him not less inductive or scientific than his Enlightenment predecessors—simply different in his conception of what constituted valid unities and interrelationships. His desired order required a different kind of narrative. Historians might argue throughout the century about which "plot" was correct, but their duty to demonstrate some kind of order would remain central to their claim to be "scientific."

Neither was a romantic emplotment by definition incompatible with the call for a more rigorous evaluation of source materials, the other major principle upon which "scientific" history rested. The older model of organized, systematized knowledge embodied in Wissenschaft could provide the basis for order in history. It was the increasing prestige of the physical sciences that prompted the historian to seek analogous ways of isolating, testing, and evaluating his data. Although as the century wore on, such "scientific" methodology was more and more often linked to assumptions and emplotments inimical to romantic history, quite the opposite was true at the outset. The work of Barthold Niebuhr and Leopold van Ranke, both professors at the University of Berlin, provided the romantic historian with an example of how he could obtain greater objectivity and rigor in the classification and analysis of documents without forfeiting his wider and more sympathetic approach to the past. At Berlin from 1810 to 1859, Niebuhr introduced stricter methods for evaluating the authenticity of source materials. Like the romantic historian, however, he valued classes over individuals and customs over law-givers in explanations of the historical process. He first gave serious attention to the hitherto neglected ballads of Rome as a valid source for its early history and broadened the base of historical research to include a much
Introduction

wider range of data. His ability to make critical methods of textual analysis serve the ends of imagination would exercise particular influence on Thomas Arnold's treatment of myth in the History of Rome.

Ranke likewise had allegiances to both romantic and "scientific" historiography. In the spirit of Niebuhr, he made the evaluation of evidence more "scientific" by insisting on strictly contemporary sources and then by analyzing them in light of the author's temperament, allegiances, his probable access to correct knowledge, and the extent of his agreement with other sources. Ranke's intention, as announced in the famous preface to his earliest work, was to move the historian from value judgments to analysis: "To history has been assigned the office of judging the past, of instructing the present for the benefit of future ages. To such high offices this work does not aspire: It wants only to show what actually happened [wie es eigentlich gewesen]." This emphasis on the facts of history was motivated as much by Ranke's rejection of the romanticized histories of Scott as by his repudiation of the value judgments of the Enlightenment. After comparing one of Scott's characterizations in Quentin Durward with that of Commines, he wrote, "I found by comparison that the truth was more interesting and beautiful than the romance. I turned away from it and resolved to avoid all invention and imagination in my works and to stick to facts."

But if history "wie es eigentlich gewesen" rejected the biases of both Enlightenment rationalism and historical romance, Ranke was far from endorsing a positivistic empiricism. Particularly outside Germany, exaggerated claims for the objectivity of his methods obscured his affinities with romantic history. He asserted the authority of the empirical and the objective to aggrandize the "more interesting and beautiful" truth he sought, but this truth was to be known through a distinctly romantic sympathizing with individualized facts. It was precisely because the past was to be re-created in all its specificity that only the most concrete, the most factual data could provide the materials for the historian. Ranke's claim that "every epoch is immediate to God," his fascination with historical personalities, his idealist assumptions, as well as his use of ballad materials and folk traditions, further ally his sympathies with those of the romantics. Central to Ranke's historiography were foregone conclusions about the preeminence of national identity that prevented his investigations from be-
Introduction

ing any more genuinely inductive than the romance and rationalism he rejected. Ranke's adoption of a more rigorous treatment of sources did not prevent the meaning of history from being as much created as discovered. "Scientific" history increased the range and reliability of historical data, but the plots it constructed out of those data provided not so much a greater, but simply a different, truth than that of romantic history.

As the century went on, the growing eminence of the factual made the subjectivity latent in "scientific" history harder to perceive and more heretical to assert. When historians began to professionalize, they often based their claims to expertise on their scientific research methods, seemingly analogous to those that insured the authority and prestige of the physical scientist. What Ranke meant as a modest disclaimer was converted into a boast that the historian actually could achieve a "scientific" exactitude in showing things as they "really" had been. The almost exclusive concentration of the Rankean school on political and diplomatic documents added to fears that historical study had to satisfy a narrowly positivistic kind of factuality in order to be scientific. The rise of Positivism, the true heir to Enlightenment rationalism, further encouraged this belief. Because positivistic science, which claimed to reduce human behavior to laws as simple and monolithic as those that ruled the natural world, rested on similar claims to complete objectivity about the data of history, scientific historiography and the scientism of Comte often became conflated in the popular mind. In the second half of the century, attacks on a "science of history" often meant attacks on the Positivist's determinism. Methodological issues were further confused by criticisms of "literary" history that made superficial scholarship the necessary counterpart of a vivid narrative. As a result "scientific" history remained implicated in the materialism of much nineteenth-century science, "literary" history in the license of much imaginative literature, despite widespread underlying agreement on the importance of both critical research methods and effective style in historical writing. Of more significance than methodology per se in distinguishing the professional's "scientific" position from that of the "literary" historian was his conscious shift in priorities. The professional's highest responsibility was not to instruct or entertain the general public but to advance knowledge in the field. In order to preserve the scientist's disinterested commitment to facts, many scholars felt they had at least

XXV
Introduction

publicly to reject the popular historian's search for moral lessons and the popular audience's presumption to judge their work—in effect, to reject the duty and the authority of the Victorian sage.

The historians I consider exemplify varying blends of Enlightenment, romantic, and "scientific" assumptions about history. In England historical writing remained the domain of the man of letters for the better part of the century. At both Oxford and Cambridge, chairs of modern history went traditionally to literary men; Charles Kingsley won the Regius Professorship at Cambridge as late as 1869. It was an age in which a civil servant like George Grote or a lawyer like H. T. Buckle could achieve an international reputation for historical research, an age when best sellers by Macaulay or Green could rival the popularity of contemporary fiction. It was the last age in which the historian could expect to command the attention of a large and relatively homogeneous audience of educated general readers and to rest his authority on his ability to teach and uplift rather than on his advance of historical knowledge.

Each of these six historians built his public role on a private, essentially romantic, attachment to the past. Each recognized the importance of imagination to historical reconstruction. Most openly endorsed the romantic view that in order to understand the past event, the historian had to relive it through an act of sympathetic projection, and that to convince readers of its importance, he had to resuscitate it through an act of literary creation. "Literary" history was philosophical in the highest sense because it claimed a poetic insight into the "symbolism of facts." It revealed spiritual truths inaccessible to mere reason and compelled the moral sense to acknowledge their reality. These historians had also learned from the romantics a widened appreciation of what constituted relevant historical data. Their very "realism" depended upon closer attention to history's sociological and physical environment. Although in actual practice most achieved only limited success in integrating geographical, social, and cultural data into the political account, all recognized the importance of such materials to a full understanding of historical change. They were particularly sensitive to the insights that myth, legend, and popular literature offered into the mind of the past.

At the same time, all understood and accepted the new standard of thoroughness and critical analysis demanded of the historian who would establish his facts on a scientific basis. Each wished to aggran-
dize the authority of his interpretation by basing it on an inductive investigation of the past. Whether acknowledged or not, however, the accuracy of facts was not an end in itself, but a means of increasing the credibility of the laws and patterns each saw in history. Most did little or no research in primary sources; those who did, like Macaulay and Froude, compromised their claims to accuracy and completeness by the ways in which they used such data. Ultimately, none possessed the conviction, important to both historicism and "scientific" objectivity, that facts were important for their own sake. Each judged facts by the extent to which they vindicated a priori assumptions about order and meaning in history. Each sought proof of the operation of laws necessary to make sense of the present.

These laws differed in crucial ways from those of the Enlightenment historians, of course. Macaulay was alone in tacitly accepting the eighteenth century's belief in man controlled by associationist laws of pain and pleasure and measured against a uniform rationality, and even he believed that he was reacting against just such "abstract" theories. The others set out consciously to refute this behavioral model as it resurfaced in Utilitarianism and Positivism and to reassert the greater power of morality and free will in human history. Where the philosophes had based progress on the triumph of reason and posited a single scale of civilization by which to measure all cultures at all times, the Victorians conceived progress as essentially moral and were capable of a more relativistic appreciation of values and customs. Their organic conceptions of development permitted them to treat ideas, institutions, and customs not as man-made artifacts but as products of historical growth whose relationship to their own time deserved understanding and respect.

Nonetheless, all based their judgments on implicitly unhistorical standards. Arnold and Carlyle superimposed their own vision of moral order on the past in order to demonstrate that history vindicated God's laws. Froude employed a double standard of credibility in order to fit the Tudors to a similar proof. The Whig historians rehabilitated the "dark" ages scorned by the Enlightenment and invoked natural growth and practical accommodation to sanction progress in uniquely English institutions. But in defining this growth by nineteenth-century priorities and evaluating past events in terms of their contributions to the present's triumphant political balance, the Whigs proved as myopic as the philosophes. Finally, the "literary" historian's responsibility to shape, to judge, and to justify was in-
compatible with the kind of detachment and restraint mandated by professional history. His primary responsibility was not to his facts but to his duties as teacher; relativism and objectivity became equally culpable if they prevented clear judgments of right and wrong. His object was not history for its own sake, but for the sake of a wider society in growing need of guidance and reassurance. When emerging professionals began to shift their allegiance from the needs of the general audience to the demands of their peers, they repudiated—or seemed to—a vital cultural function. To measure the dimensions of that function is the goal of the chapters that follow.